

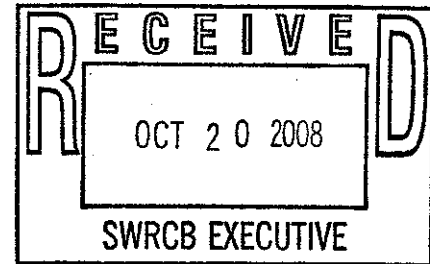


NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

October 20, 2008

Re: Development of an Urban Water Conservation Regulatory Program

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which has 1.2 million members and activists, 250,000 of whom are Californians, we are writing to offer comments on the Board's plan to develop an urban water conservation regulatory program. As you know, NRDC has long advocated for the implementation of water use efficiency programs to help meet the water needs of California's growing population while providing adequate protection for the state's aquatic ecosystems.

In the last 15 years, the existing voluntary approach to urban water conservation has had mixed results. The CALFED Bay-Delta Program completed an assessment of California's progress on water use efficiency.¹ This 2006 Comprehensive Evaluation presents the most thorough analysis to date of recent water use efficiency (WUE) efforts in California and the likely outcome of current efforts. The Evaluation highlights glaring program failures in the state's WUE programs, and clarifies that significant policy changes are critical if we are to achieve even a fraction of the potential benefits from WUE.

At the same time, the imperative to accelerate water efficiency has grown, given the need to reduce water-related energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions in order to help the state meet its goals under AB 32. For this reason, NRDC supports a mandatory conservation program.

We believe that the state should move toward performance-based approaches to measuring water efficiency, such as per capita water use reductions rather than BMP-based approaches to measuring water efficiency. In the interim, NRDC supports making the BMPs mandatory to help the state meet the Governor's goals of reducing per capita water use 20% by 2020. In order to do this, the state must improve its reporting and data management. As the Board knows, there is no consolidated water use database in the state – and the department with the best records (Department of Public Health) does not have these records available electronically. In addition, we ask that the Board develop consequences for non-compliance with BMP reporting.

We thank you for allowing us to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Kristina Ortez
Policy Associate

¹ CALFED Bay-Delta Program Water Use Efficiency Element, *Water Use Efficiency Comprehensive Evaluation*, (August 2006).